



BILL NO: Senate Bill 17
TITLE: Child Custody - Cases Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence -
Training for Judges
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: March 23, 2022
POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report with amendments on SB 17.**

Senate Bill 17 outlines extensive training for judges that preside over child custody cases that involve child abuse and domestic violence. MNADV believes that judges should be fully trained on current science and research on topics related to adolescent development, Adverse Childhood Experiences, domestic abuse, child abuse, and other traumas. However, MNADV suggests an amendment that would strike from the bill the list of topics that judicial training must include starting on page 2, line 3 until the end of page 3. As research and science is ever evolving new legislation would be required to modify the training requirements to reflect new understandings of domestic violence, childhood trauma, and best practices. By partnering with organizations that are subject matter experts in the required areas of training as SB 17 requires, judicial trainings will reflect the most current research and best practices.

If the House Judiciary Committee determines that specific types of training or categories of training be included in the legislation, MNADV suggests language similar to the laws other states have enacted such as California¹ and Connecticut.² Both California and Connecticut recognize the need for specialized judicial training but neither delineates with the specificity of SB 17 the training that must be conducted.

As drafted, SB 17 appears to limit the training requirements to judges that oversee child custody cases. Family law matters, including child custody cases that involve child abuse or domestic violence, may be assigned to magistrates. In addition, District Court judges may hear protective order hearings that involve matters of child custody in the context of child abuse or domestic

¹ CAL. GOV. CODE § 68555

² CT STAT ANN. § 46b-38c

For further information contact Melanie Shapiro • Public Policy Director • 301-852-3930 • mshapiro@mnadv.org



violence. MNADV would therefore suggest that any training requirements extend to a family law magistrates and District Court judges.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges a **favorable report with amendments on SB 17.**